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From the Newark Sentinel.

## THE MECHANIC'S STUDIES.

HISTORY.

The study of history has commended itself to considerate men, of all ages, perhaps more generally than any branch of intellectual pursuit. Holding a middle place between mere entertainment and abstruse research, it has allured into its wide and variegated fields the curious and the reflecting of every different walk in life. And this is reasonable and easy of explanation. Often has it been said, till the sentence has grown into a proverb, that 'History is Philosophy teaching by Example.' Often have the words of the Roman orator been reiterated, that 'Not to know what happened before one was born, is to be always a child.' If our great statesmen could be fairly questioned, it would be found, that they have gained more concerning the principles of government, from the story of former times, than from all their perusal of abstract treatises.

The American Mechanic is a freeman; he is one of that people to whom we ascribe sovereignty. If independent in his way of thinking, he must needs be, to a certain extent, a politician. In point of fact, all men, of all vocations, in this country, undertake to talk about the measures of government, and to give some reason for the party attachments and their votes. Here we find a good argument for the study of history, by working men.

But to this we must add other signal and acknowledged benefits, which flow from historical reading, whenever, and by whomsoever pursued. It enlarges our knowledge of the world, and gives new views of human nature; it lifts us above the petty circle of our city or our State, and brings us into a felt relation to the great system of events; it affords a lively commentary on the happy or baneful tendencies of virtue and vice; and it displays in the most striking manner the wise and wonderful plans of Divine Providence.

Before the unhappy multiplication of novels and romances young men sought their chief mental refreshment in historical reading; and there is cause for believing that by reason of this difference, the rising race is likely to be less acquainted with past events than their fathers were. A morbid taste for the excitements of romantic fiction has depraved many a mind, and in some measure placed history nearer than it once stood to what are considered severe studies. Nevertheless, after having dreamed away golden hours over many scores of novels, I am confident in saying, that in the long run, history is more entertaining than romance. Truth, it has been said, is more interesting than fiction; and the more a man extends his reading, the deeper will be his conviction of this truth. Few men could spend a week in reading novels, and nothing else; but many men spend delightful months upon the annals of great events. It is an unconscious homage to this quality of authentic narrative, that some of our greatest novelists have chosen to interweave the events of true history in their most successful romances.

No patriotic American would willingly confess that he does not feel his soul more stirred by the unvarnished tale of revolutionary conflict, than by the exciting scenes, of any fiction whatever; and the wonderful, unexpected, and rapid changes and convulsions of the French Revolution reach the passions with a mightier influence, than all the feigned terrors of tragic Muse.

As we extend our reading of history, this interest, far from decreasing, grows exceedingly in strength, so that there is no branch of study which so uniformly gains upon the affections of its votaries. In the field of romance, the factitious emotion becomes dull and dies away; but in historical researches, the studies of our youth continue to be the solace even of our old age.

It will be suitable for me to add a suggestion, as to the method in which history may be advantageously studied; and these shall be adapted to the case of such as are not surrounded by copious libraries. First, let it be observed, that no man, in one lifetime, can read all history; and that it is altogether undesirable to attempt any thing like this. Consequently, every thing depends upon the wise selection; both as to subjects, and authors. All history is not equally valuable to all; and time may be deplorably wasted over an annalist who is inaccurate, prolix, or obscure.

Secondly: method is as important here as anywhere. By method in history, I simply mean 'beginning at the beginning.' Experience assures me that half our labor would be saved, if we would cross the stream nearer to its source, or assault the tree nearer to its root. My grand counsel then is this: *Begin with generals and from these descend to particulars.* Proceed as the draughtsman does; first, sketch a rapid outline, then give the minutest touches, and at length, if time permit, add the more delicate lights and shades. Or in still plainer terms, begin with some very brief, and compendious, but clear and masterly view of general history; such an aid we have in two invaluable and well known works of 'Tyler.' A good chronological chart would afford an outline still more general. Then proceed to gain a more familiar acquaintance, first with ancient, and afterwards with modern history.

Thirdly: Beware of the false supposition, that every part of your picture is to be filled up with equal care and minuteness. Where the plantation is vast, the wise planter cultivates in well chosen spots. Be thankful that you are not called upon to know every thing. For example, the history of Carthage is less important than that of Rome; the former to most men, only as subsidiary to the latter; the one you will cursorily peruse; to the other you will repeatedly

resort through life. Again, the history of the German States may be adequately learned in an epitome; the history of England and America you will study in some detail. So again, in the case of a single country, you may very soon gain all you need about the British Hierarchy, but you will dwell with assiduity and delight on the annals of the Reformation, the Civil Wars, and Revolution. And above all, you will naturally and with eagerness, peruse almost every book within your reach, upon the subject of our own free institutions, and the struggles in which they had their birth.

Fourthly: with the cautions and provisions given above, after having mastered your outline of general history, you may safely consult your own pleasure, and read wherever you have a mind. When the canvass is once prepared and the great lines chalked out, it matters little whether the painter works upon the lead of an Achilles, or the buckle or his armor, provided he keeps on working. Never did old Shakespeare speak more pregnant truth than when he said, 'No profit grows, where no pleasure is taken.' What we learn by snatches, in moments when the mind is warm and ductile, is most apt to leave abiding traces.

Lastly: Be not unduly perplexed with the vain effort to charge your memory with mere dates. One hour over a good chronological table will in this respect do more for you than months of study. Often recur to such a table or chart, and you will soon discover that the great cardinal and leading dates will fix themselves, without a separate endeavor.

From the New York Star.

## THE SPIRIT BIRD.

Some twenty years ago, I sailed from Boston in the good brig Nightingale, of about 200 tons burthen, commanded by Nicodemus Melville, Esq., and bound on a voyage to Demerara. The foremost hands consisted of six able seamen, besides myself; but this being only my second voyage, I was rated as an ordinary seaman. We were all strangers to each other, and being but young in years, and still younger in knowledge of the world, and human nature, I naturally felt solicited to learn something of the characters of the men with whom I was destined in all human probability to associate, almost exclusively, for several months. I soon ascertained, however, to my satisfaction, that my shipmates, with one exception, were real jovial, honest, single-hearted tars, men of iron frames, who could crack their jokes, toss off their glass of grog, spin a long yarn, and handle a marlingspike or a handspike as knowingly and gracefully as any 'old salts' that ever sailed on blue water.

But there was one man on board, who shipped under the name of Jim Thompson, whose appearance and conduct puzzled me exceedingly, and in a short time became the theme of conversation among all hands. He did not seem inclined to associate with the rest of the crew, he never asked a question, and when addressed, he answered only in monosyllables. He was never seen to smile, and from his pallid cheeks, his restless eye, and sombre countenance, it was evident that anguish was preying on his heart.

But Thompson was a thorough seaman. He was athletic and active, and indefatigable in the performance of his duties. If all hands were called, Thompson was on deck in an instant; and if the word was passed to reef topsails, he sprang aloft like a cat, and was at the weather earing before the yard was clued down on the cap. If a top-gallant sail was to be furled, or a top-gallant-yard or mast to be sent down in a gale of wind, Thompson was in the cross-trees before any other man was in the rigging. Indeed, he seemed always desirous to be employed about something, and the more laborious or hazardous his occupation, the better he seemed pleased. He partook of the ship's fare but sparingly, and never drank his grog. The first day after leaving port, his allowance was handed him by the steward, and much to the astonishment of that sable functionary, he seized the glass, and hurled it with its contents overboard, muttering something between his teeth about 'poisonous, murderous liquor.'

'A queer chap, that,' said Jack Robine, 'to toss his grog overboard. If he had only passed it this way, I would have stowed it in a snug locker, where it would never have come athwart his hawser. I say, steward, 'tis a pity such good stuff should be lost. So in future, just hand me over that fellow's allowance.' Jack Robine sagely concluded that something was wrong in Thompson's upper works, otherwise he would never have refused his grog—and as temperance ships were not in vogue in those days, the rest of the crew were pretty much of Jack's opinion.

In about a fortnight we reached the 'horse latitudes,' and Thompson's demeanor was still the cause of much speculation among the crew. He was seldom known to turn into his berth in his own watch below, and when he caught a nap on a chest, or on the windlass-end, he would mutter some incoherent sentences to himself, and in a few minutes awake with a convulsive start. Although he still evinced strength and activity in the performance of his various duties, yet his flesh had gradually wasted away, and he resembled an animated skeleton, more than a being of flesh and blood.

One day before we got into the regular trade winds, we were steering to the southward with a light air on our quarter. The sea was smooth, with the exception of a long rolling swell which came every now and then from the northwest. Every rag was hung out to catch the scanty breeze, but the sails flapped heavily against the mast, and the brig moved through the water only at the sluggish rate of about a knot and a half. Thompson was at the helm. The mate and the remainder of the watch were variously employed in different parts of the ship, the captain was sitting reading on the quarter deck, under the shade of the trysail. Suddenly, Thompson was heard to exclaim, 'Great God! he has come for me at last!' The captain, on looking up, saw a large bird, somewhat resembling a man-of-war-bird, but having a head like an owl, hovering over the quarter deck. He told the steward to pass him his fowling piece; but before this could be done, the bird was no longer within shot, having flown about a quarter of a mile ahead of the brig, and then quietly alighted on the water. The captain went forward hoping to get a shot at the bird from the fore-castle. He ordered the helmsman

to steer directly for his intended victim, and when within about thirty yards he fired—the charge of duck shot struck the water all around the bird and laid him sprawling. Anxious to get him on board, some of the watch jumped into the chain-wales, others into the bowsprit shrouds and bob-stays. In a few minutes the singularly looking animal was under our bows, hands were eagerly stretched forth to grasp him, when, apparently with a convulsive effort, he recovered his natural position in the water, stretched out his wings, and, to the unspeakable astonishment of the crew, deliberately flew away!

Thompson saw this strange scene from the quarter deck, and exclaimed, 'Captain Melville, it is of no use to fire at that bird—you only waste your powder and shot—you can never hit it.' 'I'll try once more at all events,' replied the captain.

His fowling piece was again loaded. Meanwhile the strange animal had flown a few hundred yards ahead, and again settled down quietly on the water. As the ship drew near, the captain again fired. But the bird rose from the water evidently uninjured, and after soaring majestically over the quarter deck, flew away to windward until out of sight.

'I understand it all,' said Thompson, in tremulous voice, while the sweat of agony stood in large drops on his forehead. 'Captain Melville, you might fire at that bird till doomsday, and you would not hurt a feather of its wing. That bird is my father's spirit, and I know why he has come. Well, I am ready.' As he uttered these words, his eyes seemed to be lighted up with an unearthly fire.

'What do you mean, Thompson,' said the astonished captain in a soothing tone. 'Your father's spirit! What nonsense is this? Come, let's have no more of such foolish talk.'

'Call it not foolish, Captain Melville. It is truth what I say. That bird which you shot at twice, and which flew away uninjured, is my poor murdered father's spirit. Yes, the old man has come for me at last; and it will not be long before I join him.'

'Why, this is worse than folly, Thompson,—it is madness. What do you mean? What can I understand by such incoherent language?' 'Captain Melville, I know I am not always in my right mind. My brain is seared to the centre—but I am not mad now. I have something which lies heavy at my heart, and which I should like to get clear of. I wish to make my sins known to the world—and I ask it as a favor, that you will let all hands be called. I have a dismal tale to tell, and should like to have my shipmates hear it. It may do them some good; at any rate it can do nobody harm.'

There was no need of calling all hands—for we were all then standing in the waist, trying to catch the strange discourse which was passing between Thompson and the captain—and quickly obeyed the mate's signal, and gathered round Thompson on the quarter deck, who thus commenced his tale:—

'My father was a respectable farmer in New Hampshire, and I was his only son. But I was from my youth possessed of a fierce, ungovernable temper, and when about fifteen years of age, my father having laid the oxgoad over my shoulders for some trifling fault, I took a solemn and wicked oath I would never work on his farm again, and that at some future day I would be revenged; and fearlessly have I kept my oath. I ran away and went to sea. For eight years I was absent from home, during which I had visited all parts of the globe. By this time my revengeful feelings became softened down, and I wished once more to behold my parents, particularly my mother, who was always kind and indulgent. I accordingly returned to my native village. I saw my parents—sojourning with them for several weeks, and nothing occurred to damp the pleasure of my visit, until one fatal evening, I accompanied my father to a husking frolic in the neighborhood. The fowling bowl (accursed be its pernicious contents) passed briskly around, and by the time our work was completed, about midnight, we all became somewhat the more merry. Indeed, my father had so far partaken of the intoxicating draught, that he could hardly walk—and I was obliged to support him on his way home, although my brain whirled round, and I could hardly walk steadily myself.

When we had got about half way home, we came to a cross road, which my father insisted was the right path; and no argument on my part could convince him that he was wrong. With all the pertinacity of a drunken man, he insisted on pursuing that route, and when I attempted to prevent him, he struck me a violent blow on the face. This roused the demon within me. 'Ha!' said I, 'old man, a blow! You will find to your sorrow that I am a man now, and no longer to be abused by you as I was when a boy.' Upon which I struck my poor inebriated father to the earth with a blow of my fist—and then the recollection of former injuries unavenged rushing in my mind, I seized a stake from the fence and struck him several times over the head, as he lay on the ground.

But the fatal crime was hardly committed, ere I bitterly repented what I had done. I called him by name; he returned no answer. I hung over his body, and saw, by the light of the moon, the blood streaming from his disfigured visage. I would then have given worlds to have recalled him to life, for an awful voice seemed to whisper in my ear, 'He is your father.' I felt of his head, but alas! I found that his skull was crushed, and the grating of his bones sounded harshly on my ear. I then knew that he was dead, and had received his death blow from the hand of his son!

I took the corpse in my arms and wept over it for more than an hour. At length I felt the necessity of doing something to avoid incurring the suspicion of guilt, and I carried it to the foot of a precipice which was near, where I laid it among some rocks, and then proceeded to the house. I entered without noise, and retired to my room, but not to sleep. In the morning my mother entered my apartment, and inquired for my father. I affected great surprise and alarm at his absence, and assured her that he having manifested a great desire to get home, had outwalked me, and I thought he was snugly deposited in bed before I arrived. I called upon some of the neighbors, and requested their assistance to search for my father, who in due time was found at the bottom of the precipice, with his skull frightfully

fractured. No suspicions rested on me, and the old man was laid in the grave. Since that time I have never known comfort—a worm has been gnawing at my heart. I see my father in my dreams, and sometimes when I am awake he stands before me. I thought if I could quit the scene of my guilt, the image of my murdered parent would no longer haunt me. But no—he is constantly with me. Last night, while I sat upon the windlass, I fell into a drowse, and saw him in the shape of the bird, that flitted around us to-day—and he whispered in my ears, 'your time has come.'

Such was the tale of blood told by the wretched Thompson, and although we all felt detestation at the unnatural crime of which he had been guilty, we could not help pitying the miserable wretch.

While we were listening to the paricide's confession, dark, double-headed clouds rose above the horizon—and the appearance of the heavens betokened the approach of a heavy squall. Preparations were made accordingly. The royals and top-gallant-sails were furled, the courses hauled up, the top-sails clued down upon the caps, and the reef-tackles hauled out. Ere these precautionary measures were fully executed, the dark cloud had reached the zenith—the flashes of lightning were frequent and vivid, and the deep-toned thunder muttered fearfully in the distance. Soon a ripple was seen on the water, followed by a ridge of miniature waves, which breaking as soon as formed, presented the appearance of a moving sheet of foam.

'Now mind your helm, my lad,' said the captain in a clear and distinct tone, to the helmsman who had relieved Thompson—'keep her right before it.'

The squall struck the brig on her starboard quarter. 'Starboard your helm—hard a starboard,' shouted Captain Melville.

'Hard a starboard, sir,' responded the man at the helm—and in a few minutes the brig was booming along before the wind, which blew with the violence of a hurricane, at the rate of nine knots. The rain fell in torrents—and what with the roaring of the waves—the howling and whistling of the tempest—the dazzling brilliancy of the chain lightning which seemed to play around the masts, and the echoing peals of thunder, the scene was absolutely terrific. The thrilling tale told by the self-accused paricide was for a while forgotten. But suddenly a strange and awful voice was heard, which sounded louder than the conflict of the elements, as if uttered by the Spirit of the Storm—'My father calls me, my poor, dear, murdered father—I come, I come.' Then with a wild and prolonged shriek of agony, which even now rings in my ears, the maniac Thompson sprang on the quarter-rail, and ere any one could prevent the fearful act, he threw himself into the foaming ocean. No human efforts could save him. He rose in the eddying wake, and with his body half out of water, with agony of the most intense description depicted on his ghastly features, he gave another shrill and dying scream—then sunk to rise no more.

In half an hour after this event the clouds broke away—the hurricane was hushed—the sun shone forth in all its wonted splendor—the brig was ploughing her way towards her destined port, impelled by a genial breeze—when, fabulous as it may appear, two birds, similar to the one that was flying around us previous to the storm, made their appearance. They alighted for a few moments on the main-top-gallant yard, and perhaps it is unnecessary to state that they were not at this time molested by the captain. They hovered a while over the quarter deck—took a few circles around the ship—then flew away to the windward—and we never saw them more.

## BEAUTIFUL EXTRACT.

BY HON. JOSEPH HOPKINSON, L. L. D.

'The American parent does an injustice to his child which he can never repair, for which no inheritance can compensate, who refuses to give him a full education because he is not intended for a learned profession—whatever he may intend, he cannot know to what his son may come, and if there should be no change in this respect, will a liberal education be lost upon him because he is not a lawyer, a doctor or a divine? Nothing can be more untrue or pernicious than this opinion. It is impossible to imagine a citizen of this commonwealth to be in any situation in which the discipline and acquirements of a college education, however various and extended, will not have their value. They will give him consideration and usefulness, which will be seen and felt in his daily intercourse of business or pleasure; they will give him weight and worth as a member of society, and be a never failing source of honorable, virtuous and lasting enjoyment, under all circumstances in every station of life. They will preserve him from the delusion of dangerous errors, and the seduction of degrading and destructive vices. The gambling table will not be resorted to, to hasten the slow and listless step of time, when the library offers a surer and more attractive resource. The bottle will not be applied to, to stir the languid spirit to action and delight, when the magic of the poet is at hand to rouse the imagination, and pour its fascinating wonders on the soul. Swift gifts, such acquirements, will make their possessor a true friend, a more cherished companion, a more interesting, beloved and loving husband, a more valuable and respected parent.'

Miss Sully and Queen Victoria.—The following anecdote of our American artist, and his daughter, now in London, is related by the correspondent of the United States' Gazette:

Speaking of the Queen, it appears that Mr. Sully has had his sixth and last sitting. It does not appear—what, however, is notorious here—that the daughter of that accomplished artist has very lately had the chance of an interview with her Majesty. The fact is, that Mr. S. wished her to sit one day with the royal garb on—to save the Queen the trouble—and he asked consent, which was given. When things were in this position, the Queen sent to know if Miss S. would like to see her, and came in. The scene that ensued may be imagined. Bear in mind the young American lady is in the Queen's dress and seat. 'The latter looked up at her in the "most amusing funny" way, according to all accounts, and behaved altogether to a charn, as of course did our fair countrywoman, as well, though possibly a little taken by surprise. Victoria is a good hearted girl, past all doubt; and she rather likes the Americans, I think.

## ASSASSINATION—AMERICA.

It may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, that there is no part of the world professing civilization, where war is not raging, in which life is so insecure, and the murderer so safe in the indulgence of his propensities, as in certain sections of the United States. Assassination succeeds assassination with such rapidity, that the daily press, even if so disposed, cannot keep up with the current of events in its record of crime. There are parts of the Union, which require the energy of Tacitus for their government, and throw the bloody scenes formerly enacted in the Havana, altogether into the back ground—for there murderers were chiefly the refuse of society, and at least slaughtered their victims in secrecy; but in the places to which we allude, the emulators of the 'first born Cain' are frequently men of note and consideration—political leaders, lawyers, physicians, planters—sometimes the presiding officers of legislative bodies, perhaps members of Congress—often those who give tone to the society in which they move. The statistics of murder in the United States for six months would furnish ample food for meditation in this respect, and would perhaps demonstrate that this state of things arises from something radically wrong in the frame-work of society—something that demoralizes and nourishes the worst passions of man.

The passing of severe laws to bear upon this matter, and the multiplication of enactments to check the progress of bloodshed, is a mere puffing against the wind. The defect is not in the laws—mere printed paper amounts to nothing, if not animated, brought into action, and sustained by public opinion; and therefore, this 'chivalrous' assassination and murder will continue to increase in spite of law-making, just so long as sympathy is manifested for the 'good society' cut-throat, and righting by one's own hand of injuries, either real or supposed, is regarded as a proof of manhood, and of a heroic spirit. While the man, whose passions are as violent and as unregulated as the impulses of a tiger, is considered by his neighbors as a 'noble-hearted, whole-souled fellow,' as the phrase goes, and an utter recklessness in every action is a title to praise, and while this false feeling extends both to judges and to juries, individuals will be their 'original selves,' and obey the promptings of their evil dispositions. Where self-control does not find a place among the virtues, it is not likely that the temper will be broken and curbed; where 'the assassination does not trammel up the consequence,' and in fact just puts a feather in the cap, impunity and encouragement combined will cause every day to be marked with some such exhibition of 'heroism' or 'chivalry,' as those which continue to heap disgrace upon the country. These things will go on until they effect a cure by their own excess—for who can expect reformation, when, as actually occurred a year or two since in Louisiana, a minor-general and a candidate for the executive chair of the commonwealth, pronounces a funeral oration over the grave of a murderer and a suicide, and when both arrest and trial for the taking of life, as exemplified every day, are mere matters of form. A change cannot be expected until the use of the pistol and bowie knife is a certain passport to the gallows, and until this bastard chivalry which strikes down a fellow citizen in his chamber, in the street, or in the legislative hall, is choked by the friendly officers of a Jack Ketch. A few such examples—but they must be of the first class of offenders—your rich, influential, aristocratic assassins—being given in each state, would have the most wholesome effect, and when that happens, but not till then, may the people of the South and West anticipate reform. Public opinion defines crime far more effectually than law, for it is through the influence of public opinion that the offender is brought to punishment. Homicide must continue to flourish, let the statute book say what it may, where it stands in the light of a gentlemanly recreation, or at worst receives no more notice than such 'juvenile indiscretions' as breaking windows and beating watchmen in the great cities.—*Pennsylvania.*

*Proof of French Silk.*—The French have adopted a system of security against fraud in the sale of silks, by submitting it to examination and experiment in an establishment called the *condition*. Silk exposed to a humid atmosphere, and yet more to wet, will imbibe a considerable quantity of humidity without undergoing any perceptible change in external appearance. This establishment, of which there is one at Lyons and another at St. Etienne, receives about three-fourths of the whole consumption of silk. It is submitted during twenty-four hours to a temperature of from 18 to 20 degrees of Reaumur (72½ to 77 of Fahrenheit), and if the diminished weight be from 2½ to 3 per cent., the application of the high temperature is continued during another twenty-four hours. On a certificate granted by the *condition* as to its true weight, the invoice is made out. The means of correctly ascertaining the real humidity of silk are now the subject of investigation at Lyons, and it is believed that the purity of the material will, ere long, be as accurately tested as is that of metals by an assay. The quality of silk is estimated by deniers, which represent the weight of 400 ells wound off on a cylinder; the number, of course, increases with the fineness. The Alais silk is sometimes reeled from three to four cocoons, and weighs only from eight to ten deniers; sometimes from seven to eight cocoons, which will give eighteen to twenty deniers. Of French organizations, the quality varies principally from twenty to thirty-six deniers, and of French trams from twenty-six to sixty deniers.—*Dr. Bowring's Report.*

*A vignette in Bell's Life hits off the cockney loafers out of embryo:*  
'Vell, Stubbs, you seem summat like myself, tir'd a doing of nothing. Suppose as we goes and has a spree, just to keep our blood in circulation. I an't particular to a shade vot it is—breaking winders, twisting off knee-kaps, or climbing the grey bells. It's all one to me, so as we have a lark. Our masters are benjoning themselves, and I don't see vy we shouldn't have a little rational enjoyment as vell as the swells at the Vestrind.'

'Come, take a swing and pass the pot, And don't sit there so melancholy; Come, mount your tile, my Buck, and trot, And let's enjoy some fun and frolic.'

'I'm sure you won't refuse to go. Nor say, just now, that business hinders; There can't be no primer sport, you know, Than rancing bells or cracking winders.'

'Vell, Snook, your courage I won't damp— For mischief always ripe and ready; 'Tis postime rare to smash a lamp, Or wrench a knocker off, my Neddys!